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Annual ministerial review: implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women

Statement submitted by S. M. Sehgal Foundation, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100.

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Statement

Righting the future of women

S. M. Sehgal Foundation has been working in Mewat, India, for the past 10 years and pro-women initiatives form one of the main guiding principles of the foundation. The organization pursues a holistic approach called integrated sustainable village development, tackling the interrelated constraints, needs and opportunities of poor villages in a holistic way. Integrated sustainable village development rests firmly on the belief that to be effective over the longer term, the women and village poor must be empowered to participate in advancing their own development. The Institute of Rural Research and Development endeavours to build a just and equitable society for women in rural Mewat.

Gender equity trainings in the villages. The Institute of Rural Research and Development conducts training programmes to capacitate and sensitize men and women in the villages about gender equity. In addition, the training aims to affect attitudinal changes in men, wherein they accept women as equals and encourage their participation in all spheres of life, which is essential for the development of society. For women, the training aims to promote self-awareness, assertiveness and confidence. The issues comprising the content of the training programme are: the difference between sex and gender; the need for gender equity in society; gender roles and stereotypes; perceptions about roles and responsibilities and gender activity profiling; recognition of women's productive roles; equitable access and control over resources for both men and women; women's rights and women's roles in village governance and politics.

Adolescent girls programme. The Institute of Rural Research and Development adolescent girls programme tries to address the issue of literacy and social resignation among adolescent girls. It aims at providing basic literacy and at developing life skills among adolescent girls. It provides a platform for girls to express themselves and to feel important as individuals. This platform for self-expression through interactive sessions provides an opportunity for adolescents to come together and develop a positive peer culture, share their experiences and develop comradeship, which is missing in their life. They gradually build confidence and interaction skills and gain knowledge about reproductive health and legal rights, which ultimately lead to a change in their attitudes and practices and to better hygiene.

Ensuring participation of women in institutions at the local level. The Institute of Rural Research and Development aims to create a strengthened and empowered rural society by building the capacities of rural communities, with a special focus on institutions at the local level, like including village education committees, local governments and village health committees. In all these committees special emphasis is placed on ensuring the active participation of women.

Policy, advocacy on women's rights. The Institute of Rural Research and Development policy centre participated in a 16-day international campaign on violence against women. The aim of the campaign was to initiate discussions on such issues as the political participation of women, domestic violence and the dowry, which are never openly discussed in the community, and to make women aware of their rights. The campaign provided a platform for discussion on various issues related to women's empowerment.